

Interview #8

Informant: Joseph Santana, Farm Placement Representative, Santa Clara County
Place: Farm Labor Office, San Jose, Calif.

Time: 1:00 - 3:30, December 18, 1956

(Note: William W. Allan was also present during the interview, but said little or nothing.)

Anderson: You will want me to sketch in a bit of background. I'm from the School of Public Health at the University of California in Berkeley. It is part of our job to point out to the local health departments throughout the state the existence of health problems, and to provide them with information toward the solution of the problems, and perhaps some recommendations as to steps that should be taken. Well, it has seemed to us, as we looked the scene over in California, that migratory farm laborers were still not too well off when it comes to health services and so forth. So, we'd like to do a little research on the subject and see how things stand, and what might be done, if anything. I might say that at the present time, we are thinking particularly in terms of Mexican nationals within the farm labor force.

Santana: Oh, most of them are doing alright. The domestic workers have more problems than the nationals. The nationals have decent housing, but the domestics are in bad shape. They live in anything. Shacks like that one out there. (Points out window.) At my brother's place, they were sleeping in their cars. He hires nothing but men. And after they moved out, the place was littered with beer cans, Chef Boy-Ar-Dee boxes, and dog food cans. The funny thing is, they had no dogs. Now, what do you suppose they were doing with that dog food?

Anderson: I imagine they ate it.

Santana: I've heard of that, with Negroes in the South, but these were whites. Never saw anything like that before.

Anderson: Well, now, we would be particularly interested in Mexican-Americans in the domestic labor force. Do you have any idea about what percentage of the migrants in this area would be Spanish-speaking?

Santana: In the state as a whole, I would say 75% Mexican would not be too far off. In Santa Clara county, it would run higher. Say, 85%. Most come in from Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. There is also a good deal of migration up from Los Angeles. Many have their headquarters down there, and come up here maybe only for a month or two. Many have regular jobs down there, but "quit" for their "vacation" up here. One fellow comes in here, says he wants to pick prunes, I ask him, "You experienced?", he says, "Sure," I ask him, "What's your regular occupation?", he says, "Foundry worker."

They may come up here with seven or eight kids. All of 'em are out working. They make maybe \$1,000 in a month%.

Anderson: I'm particularly interested in health...

Santana: Oh, this is during the sunny season. The germs have a hell of a time!

Anderson: Well, when I use the word "health," I think in quite broad terms. You know, something more than how their chest feels.

Santana: Our paternalistic government (This in an ironical tone. HPA) is always setting up committees for the migrants. They're always trying to ~~educate~~ educate them. That's the big thing. Why, do you know this education is the most dictatorial thing in the country. It's like Russia. You have to go to school until you're 18 whether you want to or not. You have to spend so many hours in school a day... what is it, 120 minutes?

Anderson: This is something I'm interested in, very much.

Santana: Just last summer, there was the funniest thing. There was this government fellow, going down the road, pulling kids out of the orchards, to send them to school. The growers were screaming for workers at the time, so we were going down the road, right after this fellow, trying to put the kids back in the orchards.

Anderson: Who was this fellow? What's his position?

Santana: His name's Baker, I believe. He's with the Federal Wage and Hour division.

Anderson: Does he have an office here in town?

Santana: They can't afford to give him an office. His office is in his home.

Anderson: Doesn't the state have anyone doing the same sort of work?

Santana: Sure, the state has wage and hour laws, just like the federal. But the state never bothers about it. They don't have rooms enough in their schools as it is. Honest, I thought Baker was going to get killed. Or, at least, clobbered. He had hold of one boy by the shoulder, and he didn't like it a bit. The kids don't want to go to school. The growers don't want them to, the school principals don't want them. Nobody wants it but the federal government.

Anderson: I'm still interested in the braceros. Could you tell me a little about how they get along in this county?

Santana: We have 350 of the nationals here right now. Of course, 180 are being shipped out this week. This is the low point in the year.

Anderson: How many at the peak?

Santana: Oh, about 3,000.

Anderson: Will there be that many again this year?

Santana: Sure!

Anderson: The program is expanding, then?

Santana: It sure is. You want to see some figures. Here. (Takes out a fat binder. Thumbs through.) Here, you see that in both September, 1955, and September, 1956, we had about 35,000 in agricultural labor. In 1955, 2,800 out-of-state domestic migrants, 5,600 in-state migrants, and a little over 1,900 nationals. The rest were local people. Now, in 1956, we had about 3,000 out-of-state migrants, 6,800 in-state migrants, and nationals had gone up to 2,600. Locals went down.

Anderson: So you feel the bracero program is here to stay?

Santana: I don't see how they are going to get along without 'em.

Anderson: Is it because the domestics are unreliable?

Santana: The unreliability is terrific. At my place, one guy showed up at 11:00 in the morning. At 2:30 he wanted his pay. I says, "What the hell for?" He says, "I want to take a flying lesson." Can you beat that? He wanted to take a flying lesson. They're like that. These guys roam around all over the country. They don't give a damn. They'd just as soon pull out in the middle of a job. They get to go all over the country, while we never get to go anywhere! (Laughter.) No, I'm not going to ask the farmers to get rid of their nationals.

Anderson: I wonder why it is that they can't get domestic labor.

Santana: Farm wages are low. They've always been low. The farmers are screaming right now that they're not making any money as it is. They're screaming because they have only one Cadillac to ride around in. (Laughter.) Look at your construction industry. The minimum there is \$2.32 an hour. That's the minimum. In agriculture, you get \$.85 an hour to \$1.25 an hour. Who wants to stay in farm work?

Anderson: The construction industry is organized...

Santana: The migrants aren't interested in being organized. The reason they aren't interested in being organized is that they have no intention of staying in agriculture. Only the ne'er-do-wells stay in farm work. Most of your Mexicans who come out here from Texas and so forth are looking around. They use agriculture only as a stepping off point. They are hoping to get into something better.

Anderson: To get back to the nationals...

Santana: Some of the growers treat 'em real good. The Christophers have done a lot for the welfare of their workers. They have a dormitory out there for the teen-age boys. You know, to get them out of the house. The families live in one room, many of them. Mr. Lester has put in sanitary facilities, showers. But most haven't done much.

Anderson: You're speaking now of facilities for domestic migrants?

Santana: Yes. As far as the nationals are concerned, the camps have to be inspected by the State Department of Housing. They are inspected once a year, and we have to have the okay from the inspector here in this office before we will certify the grower for the nationals.

Anderson: So, the housing is really quite satisfactory.

Santana: It is when they start out. There is a problem of upkeep. Many of your migrants aren't used to good housing. They don't know what to do with it when they get it. They will chop up your furniture and your walls for fuel. I'll never forget a fellow, Dennis Taylor was his name. I remember it still. He was an Okie who came to my place to work. He had 4, 5 kids. I said, "All right, you work for me steady, I'll let you have this house. It was a 5-room house on my place I wasn't using. I fixed it up for him and everything. Well, he comes to me and he says, "I don't need all that room. It makes me uncomfortable. One room to eat in and one room to sleep in, that's all we need." Sure enough, that's what he and his family did. Then, the next thing I knew, he was keeping chickens in one room, and was renting out a couple of other rooms to other Okie families! (prolonged laughter.) When he left, I had a hell of a time getting the place fixed up again.

Anderson: Is there the same problem of upkeep with nationals?

Santana: Oh, sure. They won't use the crappers, you know. They'd rather go on the ground. They pile all their garbage indoors. They tear the screens off the doors and windows. They seem to have a positive phobia against screens.

Anderson: How many camps are there in this county?

Santana: Well, let's see... There are five or six big ones, open practically all year 'round. Then, the small growers have their own arrangements. They put them into cabins, and a variety of places...

Anderson: This county really doesn't use a lot of nationals, compared to some of the others, does it?

Santana: Down in Salinas, you'll find maybe 75% nationals. In Imperial^s, it must be close to 100%.

Anderson: Are there any wetbacks, any more?

Santana: No, hardly any. Not in agriculture. There are some working in restaurants and hotels, maybe. I remember the time they had a meeting of big government people at the Hotel _____ right down here, on the subject "What can we do about the wetback evil?" There were 11 wetbacks working in that hotel at that very time, serving these guys their meals, washing their dishes. (Laughter.)

Anderson: There were so many wetbacks at one time, not very long ago. Now hardly any. I wonder how they were able to clean them out so fast?

Santana: Oh, it wasn't hard. They're very fond of wine, so they would catch them walking down the road on their way to the bar. Or, they'd catch them in the fields.

Anderson: How did they tell who was illegal and who was a Mexican-American?

Santana: The citizens had to have a card.

Anderson: And if they lost it, say?

Santana: I remember one time I was on a ranch when the Inspector came around. There was one kid, he couldn't have been more than ~~17~~ 15 or so. He was very dark, and he was having a tough time. He would say, "I born here. I born here, meester." And the guy said, "You go to school?" "Sure," he says. So the inspector says, "Oh, yeah? Prove it. Spell cinnamon." Now, how do you like that? I couldn't spell cinnamon. Many guys, they've been to college, they have Bachelor's and Master's degrees, they couldn't spell cinnamon. But here this poor kid had to spell cinnamon. (Laughter)

Anderson: What happened to the kid?

Santana: Oh, I don't know. Maybe he talked them into it after a while. Another time I was out when the immigration people came around, and they were catching the wetbacks by the dozen on this one farm. There was one old guy working on a pear sorter near the house. Everybody was running every which way, but he just stood there and kept on working, and kept his mouth shut. Nobody said anything to him.

Anderson: I imagine the growers weren't any too happy when their workers were rounded up.

Santana: Some of them got pretty irritated. They used to fill up the ditches around the orchards with water before they'd pull a raid.

Then they'd drive in in these jeeps and tear around. My brother's wife told me about one time she was standing on the porch of her place, and saw a couple of Mexicans running through the orchard for all they were worth. She never saw anybody run so fast. Just like a couple of deer. Then a few minutes later, these inspectors came tearing through in their jeeps. They used to knock branches down and everything. And they would act arrogant. No, the growers weren't any too happy. Wetbacks were the best workers they ever had.

Anderson: Well, now, some of these growers are pretty influential. Why do you suppose they weren't ~~about~~ able to make their voices heard?

Santana: Always before all they had to do was pick up a telephone and talk to their congressman or senator. But, you know, I think the reason they weren't able to stop this drive was because of the Communist hysteria. People were talking about how many Communists were sneaking across the border to pick fruit (laughter), and this was the end. The growers couldn't put themselves in the position of defending Communism.

Anderson: I have been told by some people that the braceros are actually the same people who used to be wetbacks, only under a different name.

Santana: Have you read Galarza's pamphlet, "Stranger in The Field"? (sic)

Anderson: Yes, and I wanted to ask you about that. Is that booklet accurate? Is it exaggerated?

would you, Bill? (Bill says nothing. HA.)

Santana: I wouldn't say it is exaggerated; I would say it is highlighted, but not exaggerated. Oh, they've been giving me a hard time over it, too. Ed Hayes is trying to whitewash it. He says it's nothing but a pack of lies. Somebody told me that that Hayes was going to haul me up on the carpet and ask me, "Have you been talking to Galarza?" He hasn't asked me, but if he did, I'd say, "Sure." I don't give a damn. I'm going to get out of this ratrace. Actually, I never had a chance to talk to Galarza about the nationals. About six months ago, he called me up and said, "I've got a manuscript I'd like you to look over." I said, "Sure, I'd love to." But I didn't have a chance to get over for a couple of days, and by the time I did, he was out of town. I wish I had the chance, because I could have told him some things from right around here that would have fitted right in. As it is, he doesn't say anything about Santa Clara County. But those things go on here every day. You know they do. I know they do. They are going on within 2 miles of every Farm Placement Office in the state. Who do they think they're kidding up in Sacramento?

Anderson: Could you give me some examples of the things you have in mind?

Santana: Well, I heard about two guys who didn't want to work on Sundays. It was against their religion, they said. So they took their beds away and made 'em sleep on the floor. Why, right around the corner here, they've got them sleeping on a cattle barn.

Anderson: What about wages?

Santana: They may make up to \$30 a day. But those are the ones who are very lucky. Very lucky. I personally saw one fellow's check for two weeks' work. \$2.06. How do you like that? \$2.06 for two weeks' work. Figure it out. They are supposed to get the prevailing wage for locals, but the prevailing wage is expressed as a range, from \$.85 to \$1.00 an hour, let's say. What do you think the national gets?

Anderson: Nearer to \$.85, I suppose.

Santana: He always gets \$.85. I've been told there are exceptions, but I've never yet actually seen one. All right, he gets the minimum wage. Then, do you suppose he works full time?

Anderson: I wouldn't know.

Santana: He is guaranteed 64 hours' work in a two weeks' period. That's the minimum, three-fourths of full-time. And that's what he commonly gets. Oh, it's a shame what they do. D'Arrigo has a camp in Sunnyvale. I'll tell you how he operates. He gets his nationals up at 2:30 in the morning, to take them down to Gilroy to pick celery. You know celery has ~~be~~ to be taken care of while it's still early and cool. The last bus arrives at, maybe, 7:00. The others have been there for half an hour or an hour, working. Do you know when their pay starts?

Anderson: No.

Santana: When the last bus arrives. All right. They work until maybe ten o'clock on celery. Then they're loaded into the busses, and hauled to another D'Arrigo farm. They may not get back to Sunnyvale until night time. It is common for them to spend thirteen hours a day away from camp, that way, but have only five hours' work time to show for it.

Anderson: But there are means provided for them to complain, aren't there?

Santana: Listen, I'll tell you about that. Two guys here in Santa Clara County complained to their consul. He's the one who's supposed to handle their complaints. He made the mistake of telling the employer the names of the employees when he told him about the grievance. By five o'clock that afternoon they were fired.

Anderson: For heaven's sake!

Santana: Sure. All the growers have to do is drive up a bus, open the door, and say, "Get in. You're going back to Mexico." That's what they use to keep 'em in line. "Get back to Mexico." Why, they have those nationals scared to death. The growers don't care. They have two nationals for every job.

Anderson: How can they get away with that? I thought the program...

Santana: There are plenty of techniques. Two years ago, we were swamped with cherry pickers around here. Domestic migrants. Some crop somewhere else in the country failed, so here they were, ahead of schedule. We didn't know what to do with 'em all. Last year, we couldn't get cherry pickers for love nor money. Now, when we draw up our estimates of need for next year, they are going to say, "We have to have nationals to harvest our cherries. Look at last year." And they can get away with it, because they have the figures to back them up. Then if we get a normal number of domestics, there won't be enough work to go around.

Anderson: But they have to take the domestics, even if they already have nationals, don't they?

Santana: That's what it says in the rule book. But it also says, "qualified domestics." There are plenty of jokers in that one. They can say a fellow hasn't had enough experience, or he comes to work late, or he breaks branches-- I've heard that one plenty of times -- or he drinks, or he's lazy, or lots of things. Oh, there are lots of ways. Last fall they started pruning real early, while the domestics were still working in canneries. They said, "We need workers right now." We said, "We haven't got 'em." They said, "All right, we want nationals." There wasn't a thing we could do.

Anderson: One thing that I've wondered about is this: since they have to provide housing for nationals, and pay their transportation, and so forth, why is it they want them so badly?

Santana: Well, of course, they want a stable supply. As the State Employment Department says, "Think of nationals as insurance." Sure, you may have to keep 'em in camps for a week or two, giving 'em subsistence, while there's no work, or domestics are doing your work. But when your domestics drift away, you've still got your nationals. It's insurance. Then, another thing, they're subervient. They are captive labor. It's really not much different from slave days. One grower told me, "I have a man. He's a good man. I want to keep him. His contract's about to expire. What'll I do?" I said, "Give him a letter to take back to Mexico with him. He'll be able to get a visa." This fellow says, "But he'd be free then, wouldn't he, free to go anyplace he wanted?" I says, "Yes." He changed the subject.

Anderson: Is it true that the nationals are exceptionally hard workers, ~~even~~ and that they perform well, even in jobs that they haven't been accustomed to in Mexico?

Santana: Oh, they learn very fast. Yes, a national is twice as good a worker as any local. I guess the locals are spoiled by our soft civilized living. (Ironical laughter.) The national doesn't expect a coffee break in the morning and afternoon, for example. He works like a dog. Even a hungry white man can't keep up with him. There was a fellow came in here one time, he says, "Mister, I need a job real bad." I says, "I haven't got much right now. I can give you a job out with D'Arrigo, but it'll be tough." He says, "That's okay. I'll take it." He was no bum, you understand. He was really doing his level best. At noon, he comes back. He says, "I just couldn't take it. I was killing myself, and still wasn't able to keep up with them." You see why D'Arrigo likes to use nothing but nationals?

Anderson: But they aren't always on piece work, are they? On a straight hourly wage, I wouldn't think there would be the incentive to kill themselves.

Santana: Sometimes they are on piece work, sometimes not. It all depends on what is the practice with locals. ~~Sometimes~~ On picking tomatoes, fruit, things like that, it's mostly all piece work. As far as the incentive is concerned, there's the incentive that they don't want to be sent back to Mexico. They work just as hard one way as the other. Remember, the grower can drive up that old bus any time he thinks they aren't putting out enough, and say, "Okay. Get in."

Anderson: Have most of them got a pretty good idea what's in their contracts? A lot of them can't read, can they?

Santana: Oh, they know what's in the contracts, all right. The whole trouble is, the machinery for complaints doesn't work the way it's set down on paper. The contracts provide for the workers to have a representative or spokesman, right?

Anderson: Yes.

Santana: Well, they tried that. But we cleaned 'em out. Called 'em all radicals and Communists. (This is an ironic tone. HPA.) That reminds me of _____'s definition of a Communist. What's a Communist? He's a guy who wants a nickel more than the others are getting.

Anderson: So, what machinery is provided at the present time for complaints?

Santana: First, the complaint goes to the Association.

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Anderson: The Farmers' Association?

Santana: Yes. The grower is called in, and he presents his side of it. If they can't straighten it out, they take it to the Compliance Man, or the consul.

Anderson: What is the Compliance Man?

Santana: Employer Service Representative is his exact title now, I think. He's from the U.S. Employment Service. He is supposed to be the first one to get complaints, but he isn't. Everything depends on how strong a person he is. They had a good man in this area, but they got rid of him. They don't want a good man.

Anderson: Is there anybody in the camps themselves who serves as a spokesman for the nationals?

Santana: No, and in my opinion, this is the key to the breakdown of the whole program. It's no good to have a man come around once a week or once a month, and say, "Is everything okay, boys?" They have never been allowed to have spokesmen right in their own camps. That is the key to the trouble.

Anderson: There is nothing in the contracts to preclude their having such spokesmen -- anybody they wish?

Santana: Nothing. In fact I believe the contracts specifically state it can be anybody they wish. This is what the union is going on. The union says, "We have a right to organize the nationals." The growers say, "Oh, no, you don't." So, right down to the present, nobody speaks for the nationals.

Anderson: Wouldn't the key to the trouble, then, be the fact that the unions are weak throughout farm labor generally?

Santana: Agricultural workers simply can't be organized. It can't be done. At least, I don't expect to live to see it done.

Anderson: Why?

Santana: The Mexican is a second-class citizen. He is afraid. That's the basic difficulty. If he gets into trouble with the law, he really suffers. I know it's true, too, because I've seen the police slapping those Mexican boys around. So the Mexicans don't do anything that they figure might get them in wrong with the law. And that includes labor union activity, or getting together and expressing themselves in any way. Secondly, as I said before, ~~xxx~~ Mexicans aren't planning to make agriculture their life work. The ones who stay in it are the ne'er-do-wells, the shiftless ones -- and we have plenty of them in the Mexican community, and in the white community, too -- and you can't organize them. They don't give a damn about anything. You'll find that the bulk of the people in migratory farm work are pretty shiftless.

Anderson: It's strange that an intelligent fellow like Galarza would go on, year after year, beating his head against a stone wall, trying to do the impossible.

Santana: Well, Galarza hasn't done much in California lately. He's had some success in Florida, and various places. But I think he's pretty much given up in California. Whenever got anywhere. They would send men into the farm placement offices in Salinas, and they would say, "I want to work for Mr. Saunders." Well, it was as plain as day that they were planning to strike Saunders. So the office would say, "No, we can't send you there." They would say, "But we know they need men out there, because just a minute ago we heard you send somebody out there." The office would say, "We reserve the right to send you anyplace we want." And I suppose they have the right, too. In Salinas I'm afraid they work more for the employers than for the workers.

Anderson: I would be interested to know what the nationals do with their time when ~~when~~ they aren't actually out in the fields. What do they do for recreation, in other words?

Santana: Nothing, mostly. They just sit around catching flies. Of course, a lot of the time they are being hauled around in trucks and busses, like I told you. There was a lot of trouble with transportation for a while. Nine nationals were killed in one truck accident; eleven in another. They used to haul them around in any old thing. One time I remember, D'Arrigo had a bunch he wanted to bring in to the consul to renew their contracts. He didn't want to lose any more time than he could help. so he went out to the field where they were working, and loaded ~~the~~ 'em onto the first thing he could find. They happened to be spreading manure that day, and the manure spreader was the handiest thing around. So he loaded 'em onto that manure spreader and brought 'em into downtown San Jose to see the consul. The consul squawked, but by that time it was too late. God, I wish I had a picture of that! I couldn't believe it, but there it was. A manure spreader, coming down the main street of San Jose, with a bunch of Mexican nationals standing on the back of it! (Loud and prolonged laughter.)

Anderson: To get back to the matter of leisure time, do they ever leave their camps and wander around in town?

Santana: Oh, sure. And say, that leads to somethings you might be interested in. You know how it is -- men cooped up by themselves, they get out in town, they want to have a little fun. They see a pretty girl -- well, you know how it is. I understand that this is disrupting family life at the other end of the line. There are all sorts of problems. A fellow comes home, and he doesn't want to stay settled down the way he was before.

Anderson: I'm glad you brought that up, because it's precisely the sort of thing I am interested in.

Santana: The fellow who could really tell you all about this is Father Riley (Reilly?), out at De Coto. He has done a lot of work along this line. De Coto is the farm labor capitol of Alameda County. Father McDonald here in San Jose could tell you a lot, too.

Anderson: I hope to talk with both of them in the very near future. How about diet and nutrition? Can you tell me anything about that?

Santana: Most of the food end of things is handled by people who contract for it, rather than by the growers themselves. Most of the food is pretty good. Nothing fancy, you understand. Beans and meat. Oh, we've heard some stories -- out at the Marchisi (?) Camp, for example, they were feeding them nothing for lunch but sandwiches made of hard, dry bread with bean filling. But let me tell you when they really get poor diets -- when they cook for themselves. Some of the small growers, you know, don't have facilities for feeding their nationals, so they let them do it for themselves. Why, they damn near starve to death, trying to save money.

Anderson: Yes, I can understand how that could happen.

Santana: If you really want to see some lousy diets, forget about the nationals, and just follow a local Mexican woman around when she does her shopping. She'll buy soda pop -- they love soda pop -- and flour. Lots and lots of pastry. Never any vegetables or fruit. Sometimes I wonder if this isn't why they're so lethargic. It's something you really ought to study. Out in the camps, they love soda pop, too. Of course, out there, they charge 'em fifteen cents, in vending ~~xxxxx~~ machines, because they're nationals. (Laughter.)

Anderson: To sum things up, Mr. Santana, you feel the bracero program is here to stay -- for the foreseeable future at least?

Santana: Sure. The growers aren't going to give them up.

Anderson: How about the Japanese and Filipino workers they are bringing in?

Santana: Those are just dribbles. And you know something? I think that is just a scheme cooked up by Red Harrigan and the boys to use as leverage in case the Mexican Government begins to ask too much. They can say, "All right, if you don't like our deal, we'll simply expand our program with Japan." I don't really believe they intend to use them on a large scale. They won't work like Mexicans. Japan is like the United States now, with social security and so forth. They've been spoiled, like us.

Anderson: You say this was Mr. Harrigan's idea?

Santana: I think so. Red Harrigan -- he's the Agricultural Commissioner for Imperial County, you know -- actually runs the whole national program. He has a direct pipeline to Washington. He and Sanborn, and Jack Bias from our own area, and Jimmy Mills -- these are the fellows who really run the program.

Anderson: They were quite happy over the old wetback situation, weren't they?

Santana: Yes, but they're happy over the present situation, too. They're still paying them maybe fifty or sixty cents down in Imperial right now. And they don't have to worry about raids any more. Oh, they run things, all right. One time Bob Stevens of the State Employment Department went down to Imperial County, and tried to conduct a wage survey. One fellow went back inside his house and came out with a great, big shotgun, and said, "Get off my property, or I'll fill your prat full of lead." They told him, "Here are the figures," and he had to take them. I noticed that the latest wage estimate to come out of Imperial County was signed by Ed Hayes himself. You know what that means. They didn't send anybody down there at all.

Anderson: The bracero program has to be renewed each year, doesn't it? And isn't it subject to cancellation by either the U.S. or Mexican Governments?

Santana: Yes, they're about to meet again. They do it every year. Last year, they were hung up over the question of who was going to sell the insurance, Mexican or American insurance interests. The Americans got it. This year -- well, I don't think there will be any trouble. Cortinas -- isn't that the Mexican resident's name -- has just recently made a statement, assuring American growers they don't need to worry. I see no reason at all why the program won't continue indefinitely. You can always get what you want from the Mexican Government, by the old mordido. Every once in a while, you hear that the economy of Mexico is being strengthened, and pretty soon they won't be able to spare any workers. All I know is, there are still an awful lot of them clamoring to get into this country. At a recruiting station in Monterrey, I heard where the crush got so bad, the whole wall of a building gave way, and seven people were killed. Yes, I think there's no question about the nationals being used. The instability in domestic labor is terrific. Out on my place last summer, I picked 20 tons of 'cots. Do you know, I had 34 different names on my payroll, the turnover was that bad. Twenty years ago, I would have had two Portuguese, and they would have picked my crop, and my neighbors' crop too. You must remember, the growers are having a tough time, many of them. Prune prices were down to four cents this year. Celery was down. Most of the other prices haven't moved up to keep pace with the cost of living. But the interesting thing is that the ones who use nationals in a big way are the big growers, who aren't having such a tough time. They are having their cake and eating it, too.

Anderson: I am curious, as you have described how this program works in practice -- why do these nationals put up with some of these things?

Santana: One big thing is that they come up here heavily in debt. You read Galarza on this. He says they have to borrow \$250 to come up here. That may be a little high. But, anyway, they have to borrow, and they come up here with that on their shoulders. If they don't make good, their families will be ruined. This is why they are so eager to please, and willing to put up with almost anything.

Anderson: Is there anything else, Mr. Santana? I fear Mr. Allan and I have to be getting back to Berkeley before long...

Santana: You know, they are having a lot of trouble with the local Mexicans smoking marijuana. Lots and lots of them have the habit.

Anderson: Does it really seem to affect them adversely?

Santana: It makes them poorer workers. It makes them listless and dreamy.

Anderson: Is it a problem among the braceros?

Santana: I don't think so

Anderson: For all its shortcomings, would you say the bracero program is an improvement over the wetback situation?

Santana: Oh, sure. There they didn't have to give them shelter or food or anything. One fellow I know right outside of town had some wetbacks working for him two or three weeks. They harvested his crop for him. When they came around for their wages, he called the Immigration authorities, and they hauled those poor guys off, and there wasn't a thing they could do about it. I know that the labor contractors -- you know, the guys who rounded up the wetbacks, and transported them around -- were blackmailing them regularly. "If you don't pay me an extra 25% of your wages, I'll turn you in." Oh, yes, the national program is an improvement in many ways. And it will work itself out. They've got to have those fellows. The locals would rather draw unemployment. They send them over here from the main employment office. They're supposed to take any job that they are qualified for, you know. Well, they will come in here, and I'll say, "Ever picked pears?" "Oh, no." "Ever picked snap beans?" "Oh, no." "Ever picked apricots?" "Oh, no." "Ever been up on a ladder?" "No." (Laughter.) Why, hell, I know they're lying; I've seen 'em doing that kind of work myself. So, we'll continue to have the nationals. There are plenty of abuses, sure. Wouldn't you pay 'em \$.85, instead of \$1.00? That's free enterprise. But things will work out. The program will settle down. It has to.